High-paced innovation
at Dutch IJsselland hospital

The Dutch IJsselland hospital is focusing on innovation. With technology and software, it is bringing care to the home environment of its patients with a view to delivering apt care in the right place. The hospital wants to give patients more control over their health and strives to reduce the workload of their nurses. "In an early stage, innovation will cost time and money and asks for a lot of patience, while there is no guarantee of the desired results. On the other hand, if processes are handled the right way and if the right choices are made, innovation can have many benefits," says Marten Schalk, innovation manager at IJsselland hospital.

Customer
IJsselland Ziekenhuis

Best practice
Bringing fitting care to the home environment

Solution
Remote patient monitoring

Finding the right balance

According to Schalk, innovation in healthcare is essential. "In the Netherlands, for example, it was decided by the government that there will be no more growth in hospital turnover from 2022 onwards. It is essential to keep healthcare affordable, but the consequence of this government measure is that hospitals need to treat more patients with the same amount of funds and fewer staff, due to shortages. The only way you can meet this challenge is by innovating."

So what does innovation entail exactly? "The common denominator is the introduction of new products or services within an organization. This means taking a step out of the daily rush of your job to think about needs, difficulties and areas of improvement. That is innovation. Within a hospital, this can be quite demanding; you cannot just ask a couple of nurses or doctors, with a high workload, to start thinking about innovation. That is why we are continuously looking for a balance

between identifying needs and difficulties and proactively bringing new and fitting ideas and solutions to the table all the same."

An organization can 'renew' itself in three ways, Schalk delineates. "First of all, you can try and invent solutions by means of research and development. However, you will need ample financial punching power and as a general hospital, we do not have that. A second option is to copy proven solutions from other hospitals and apply them in your own organization."

Finally, an organization can improve existing processes – usually a task of the organization's management. "Within our hospital I am focusing on the latter two", Schalk adds. "They are many examples in other hospitals that would work in our organization, making use of lessons learned. At the same time, innovation does not need to be something 'big'; small changes can already have a large impact."

Innovative projects

As part of its innovation strategy, IJsselland hospital applied for various transformation funds, made available by the Dutch government, for five innovative eHealth projects. All five projects were approved for, among others, the remote care management of heart failure and inflammatory bowel disease patients and patients suffering from COPD. According to Schalk, the internal stakeholders were closely involved and there was a realistic business case to substantiate the applications, which led to a success.

"We spent a lot of time and attention into developing our business cases. What is a realistic cost estimate and what benefits will it yield? Through thorough research, we managed to create an adequate substantiation for what we will do and where we want to be three years from now. It helped us to explain how much funding we needed and to sway payers and insurers into working with us to realize our goals.

The remote care management project for heart failure patients is already a success, says Schalk. "As a first step, together with cardiologists and nurses we decided which key functionalities software needs to have to provide remote care management. This pragmatic 'needs package' was sent to various software suppliers. Next to adhering to laws and regulations, our most important starting point was that eHealth should be a tool to support the care process, not an end in itself. That is why we looked for suppliers who deliver solutions that fit the process that we are trying to establish within the hospital."

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03
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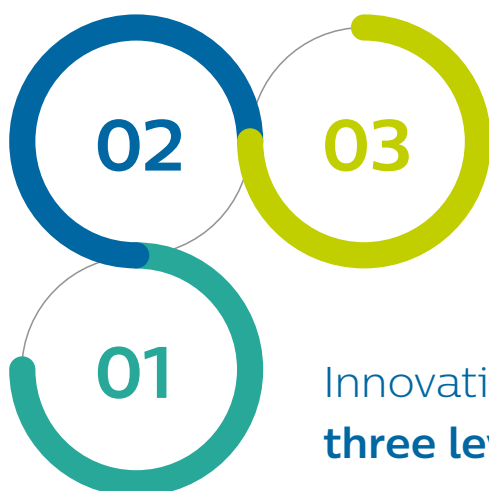
Innovation at
three levels

01
Through research and development

02
Applying best practices in own organization

03
Improving existing internal processes

Working together across the care network

A couple of months ago, the heart failure remote care management project started with software and equipment from Philips. Philips is closely involved in the whole process. Schalk: "Philips has extensive experience with remote monitoring and provides peace of mind in the project. On the one hand, this is thanks to their contract with Centric, which implements the equipment at home with the patient. This allows us to focus on doing what we do best: providing care."

"At the same time, within this project we work together with medical service center Buro Helder. They monitor patient home measurement results and check them for deviant values. If our nurses were to do this themselves on a daily basis, it would take up too much of their time. However, by working with Buro Helder our nurses are presented only with relevant results in their system, so they can immediately act on any deviating values. Buro Helder acts as a first filter, so to speak."

A quick start

The heart failure project with Philips was off to a quick start. Within two months, IJsselland and Philips developed the care process, realized the technical implementation and trained staff. In August 2019, they connected the first group of patients to the Philips solution.

Since then, the number of users has increased by the week. "The main benefit for these patients is that, by using the Philips solution, they can reduce their number of visits to the hospital. Our patients also find it reassuring that someone is keeping an eye on their measurement results on a regular basis. In addition, patients gain more insight into and control over their own health and care. This type of remote care management helps our patients improve their lifestyle.

In the near future, the number of functionalities in the current solution will be expanded through Engage, a platform for health and care programs that allows care providers to apply remote care management and to cooperate across the care network. Engage should especially stimulate the cooperation in the patient's care network. Every care provider involved with a certain patient should be able to work together with other involved care providers within Engage to share information and take decision about the treatment together, with the care providers and the patient.

Once an increasing number of primary care networks is connected to Engage, the hospital and other care providers can work together even more efficiently and deliver care in the right place in the care network. "Together with primary care organizations, we can discover additional possibilities to further improve the health of patients in our region", Schalk finalizes.

Marten Schalk,
Innovation Manager at IJsselland Hospital

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